

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A system for the adjustable placement of foodstuff, the system comprising:

a lateral conveyance apparatus having a first transport surface constructed and arranged to receive rows of foodstuff items, wherein the rows may contain various numbers of foodstuff items, and a lateral shift mechanism linked to the transport surface and an adjacent second transport surface.
2. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the second transport surfaces is included on an axial spacing apparatus adjacent and downstream to the lateral conveyance apparatus.
3. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1 further including a means for sensing the location of the foodstuff items on one of the transport surfaces and communicating a signal to the lateral shift mechanism.
4. (Original) The system of claim 3 wherein the sensing means communicates to the lateral shift mechanism through a controller.
5. (Original) The system of claim 1 further comprising a stroke adjuster for setting the lateral travel of the lateral shift mechanism.
6. (Original) The system of claim 3 wherein the sensing means comprises a contact sensor.
7. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein one of the transport surfaces comprises a conveyor belt.

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8. (Currently amended) The system of claim 7 further comprising a ~~timing means~~ motor assembly for controlling the speed of the conveyor belt.

9. (Original) The system of claim 3 wherein the lateral shift mechanism comprises a pneumatic or hydraulic cylinder assembly.

10. (Currently Amended) A system for adjustable placement of foodstuff, comprising:
~~a set of transport surfaces, and in the set:~~

a pair of transport surfaces ~~in the set~~ wherein one of the pair of transport surfaces is adapted to present rows of foodstuff items, wherein the rows may contain various numbers of foodstuff items, so that the foodstuff items [is]] are received on a downstream member of the pair transferred from one of the transport surfaces in a first arrangement to another of the transport surfaces in [[an]] a second laterally shifted and axially more compact arrangement than transferred from an adjacent upstream transport surface, and
~~a pair of transport surfaces adapted so that foodstuff is received on a downstream member of the pair in a laterally shifted arrangement relative to the arrangement carried on an adjacent upstream transport surface~~
arrangement, the system being capable of delivering the rows of foodstuff items to a downstream food processing apparatus in a nested arrangement.

11. – 13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A system for the adjustable placement of foodstuff, the system comprising:

an upstream apparatus for presenting ~~a first set~~ plural sets of foodstuff items with each set arranged in rows, wherein each row may contain various numbers of foodstuff items.

a transport surface that receives the foodstuff items from the upstream apparatus;

a lateral shift mechanism mechanically linked to the transport surface for selectively

laterally adjusting the transport surface within a predetermined range so that a

~~second~~ one set of foodstuff items being presented by the first upstream

apparatus is offset ~~therefrom~~ from an adjacent set of foodstuff items; and

a downstream apparatus for processing foodstuff ~~that receives on a transport surface~~

~~the sets of foodstuff from the lateral adjusting conveyor,~~ the downstream

apparatus having a transport surface for receiving the plural sets of foodstuff

from the lateral adjusting conveyor.

15. (Currently amended) The system of claim 14 further including a means associated with the laterally adjustable conveyor for sensing the location of the foodstuff items on the transport surface.

16. (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein the upstream apparatus comprises an axial spacing apparatus.

17. (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein the downstream apparatus comprises an oven with a transport surface running therethrough.

18. (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein the downstream apparatus comprises an axial spacing apparatus.

19. (Original) The system of claim 14 further comprising an axial spacing apparatus disposed between the lateral shift mechanism and the downstream apparatus, the transport surface linked to the lateral shift mechanism capable of transferring foodstuff at a higher speed than the transport surface of the downstream apparatus.

20. (Original) The system of claim 14 further comprising an axial spacing apparatus disposed between the upstream apparatus and the transport surface linked to the lateral shift mechanism.

21.-25. (Canceled)

26. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a lateral conveyance apparatus comprising the steps of:

- providing a transport surface for receiving plural sets of foodstuff items arranged in rows, wherein each row foodstuff items may contain various numbers of foodstuff items ;

- providing a lateral shift mechanism; and

- assembling the transport surface to the lateral shift mechanism so that the lateral shift mechanism laterally shifts the transport surface within a predetermined range.

27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 26 further comprising the steps of:

- providing a sensing means for sensing ~~items of~~ the foodstuff items on the transport surface; and

assembling the sensing means to the apparatus so that the foodstuff items may be sensed, the sensing means including means for generating a signal to activate the lateral shift mechanism.

28. (Original) The method of claim 26 further comprising the steps of:

providing a stroke adjuster; and

assembling the stroke adjuster to the apparatus so that the lateral shift mechanism may be set within the range.

29. (Original) The method of claim 26 further comprising the steps of:

providing a speed controlling mechanism; and

assembling the speed controlling mechanism adjacent to the apparatus so that the speed of the transport surface may be adjusted.

30. (Currently amended) The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of:

aligning the transport surface of the lateral conveyance apparatus adjacent a second transport surface so that ~~items of~~ the foodstuff items may be transferred from one transport surface to the other.